

cinema



* General view as guests arrive for a screening during the 64th Cannes Film Festival in Cannes, France, this week. The Festival records a mammoth number of visitors coming into the city, some of whom may have less than honourable intentions.

But beware, these measly looking Cannes beggars could also double up as pickpockets or change their costumes and walk into plush hotel suites to rob you of your valuables. I would think that this is enough fodder for films at Cannes.

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A better show from India

India shines, and incredibly. So we are told time and again by politicians in power and bureaucrats back home. The India Pavillion at Cannes, right on the beach in what is called the Village, is certainly shining this year.

Admittedly, the pavillion has a bright new look, a vast improvement from previous years when it looked dowdy and even unaesthetic. The reason could be that the National Film Development Corp of India (NFDC) is in charge of the pavillion this time, and on even on day two of the Festival, things seemed organised and even pleasing — a stark contrast to last year when the movie industry had set it up. And mucked it up to the dismay of visitors and Indian participants.

As D S Reddy, Joint Secretary in the Information and Broadcasting Ministry, told me, they felt that it was a better idea to let the NFDC take charge and be accountable for any lapse, rather than let the seriously divided Indian film industry organise the pavillion with little or no responsibility. Once the Festival is over, the people supposedly accountable disappear.

The NFDC is promoting six Indian directors at Cannes, in line with a series of steps being taken to push the country's cinema in overseas territories. This will also help strengthen ties between Indian and foreign movie industries. These are days of collaboration, and the most unlikely of partnerships are happening today.

The six filmmakers being promoted at the festival are: Dibakar Banerjee (who helmed *Oye Lucky, Lucky Oye!* and *Love, Sex Aur Dhoka* and who will soon begin shooting a political thriller, *Shanghai*), Anurag Kashyap (who made *Dev D* and *That Girl In Yellow Boots* and who has recently wrapped up *Gangs Of Wasseypur*), Anusha Rizvi (*Peepli [Live]*) which screened at Sundance and Berlin and which has just opened in the UK), Laxmikant Shetgaonkar (director of *The Man Beyond The Bridge*, a Konkani-language film which won the international critics prize in the Discovery section at Toronto), Sekhar Kammula (director from Andhra Pradesh whose credits include *Happy Days and Leader*), and Haobam Paban Kumar — (award-winning documentary and television director from Manipur).

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A criminal side to Cannes

The film festival city has been attracting all kinds of crooks — from petty thieves, to nimble-fingered pick-pockets to the more daring intruders who quietly visit your hotel room while you are out,

writes **Gautaman Bhaskaran**

There are many, many movie festivals across continents. Probably several in a single month. But the Cannes Film Festival, running till May 22 this year, is unique on many counts, one being that crime thrillers actually take place outside the theatres — and all over this essentially rich town.

Cannes has in recent years been acting like a magnet, attracting all kinds of crooks — from petty thieves, to nimble-fingered pick-pockets to the more daring intruders who quietly visit your hotel room while you are taking in a Lars Von Trier or a Woody Allen or a Pedro Almodovar or a Gus Van Sant.

When you get back, you find to your utter dismay that your room has been burgled, and often the hotel has no clue about how the robbery could have taken place right under the very nose of its so-called security ring.

A friend and journalist from *The Times of India* in Mumbai, Meena Iyer, found her first ever trip to Cannes some years ago beginning on a note of dread when her mobile telephone was stolen from her handbag. She got another instrument all right, but had to spend the rest of her days at the Festival without her directory of telephone numbers. For a journalist nothing, nothing can be more dreadful than this.

The editor of the London-based *Screen International*, Mike Goodridge, had his wallet picket from his jacket as he was walking down the Croisette or Cannes' beach front a couple of years ago.

Worse than these are intruders in your hotel room — five star properties included — who escape with passports, jewellery, money and even clothes. I wonder what the burly security guys do when thieves sneak in. Are the guards so celebrity-struck that they let their

attention be easily distracted to let unwelcome visitors coolly saunter into guest rooms?

Of late, Goodridge writes in a column of his, "Internet sites hawking non-existent accommodations have been a huge problem". He says a British producer friend of his became the latest victim of the so-called accommodation scam. The friend looking for living quarters during the Festival contacted a company called Euro-Events, which had sent him an e-mail offering inexpensive apartments at Cannes.

He wired €1,800 for the advertised apartment and never heard anything from Euro-Events after that. What is more, the company's telephone numbers that the friend had been calling suddenly went out of order. He has filed complaints with the police, but I wonder whether anything at all can be done to get the money back.

All these nefarious activities

are perhaps a fallout of the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the huge political and economic uncertainty in other parts of Europe. People have been displaced from their homes, have lost their livelihood and incomes, and they have been forced to wander across the land to become illegal immigrants.

Cannes with all its prosperously famous men and women must have seemed particularly tempting to those wandering souls, and the Festival records a mammoth number of visitors coming into the city.

I have always been shocked to see so many beggars bang outside the Festival Palace, the last word on glamour and eminence. One sees men in smelly, tattered clothes asking for alms even as they rub shoulders, or just about, with the powerful and the wealthy on the streets. Pregnant women or those with children can be seen pleading for a euro or two.